2025 ECONOMIC REPORT

OZARK REGION

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Ozark Region is comprised of seven counties in the southwest quadrant of Missouri. This region is home to several cities including Springfield, Branson, Nixa, and Marshfield.

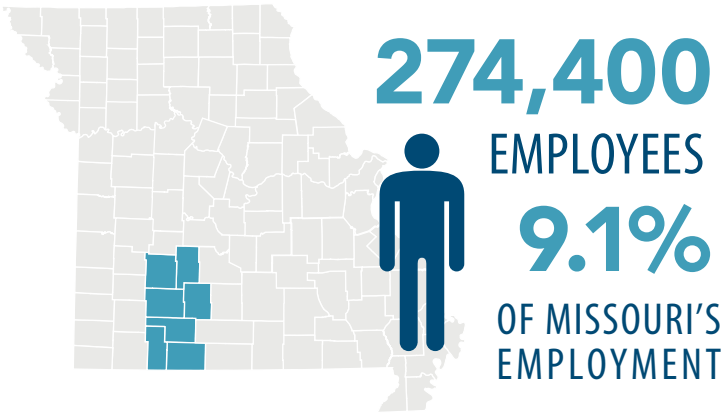
The Ozark Region workforce had more than 274,400 employees, making up 9.1 percent of Missouri's employment. In 2024, 49.7 percent of the workforce was female and 50.3 percent was male, while the Missouri average was 50.1 percent female and 49.9 percent male workers in the workforce. The regional average unemployment rate for 2024 was 3.6 percent, compared to 3.7 percent for Missouri and 4.0 percent for the nation.

The workforce is getting older in the Ozark Region, a trend continuing throughout Missouri and the U.S. In 2024, 22.3 percent of the workforce was age 55 or older, up from 19 percent a decade earlier. It was 23.5 percent for Missouri and 24.1 percent for the nation in 2024.

For the region, 9.8 percent of the workforce was non-white and 4.9 percent was Hispanic or Latino. This compares to the state averages of 18.1 percent non-white and 5.1 percent Hispanic or Latino.

In the Ozark Region, 5.9 percent of the region's population (ages 18 to 64) speaks a language other than English at home. By comparison, Missouri was at 7.4 percent and the U.S. was at 23.8 percent.

The Ozark Region has a slightly higher percentage of the population with a disability compared to the state and nation. For the Ozark Region, 12.7 percent of the population had a disability compared to 12.6 percent in Missouri and 10.7 percent in the U.S.



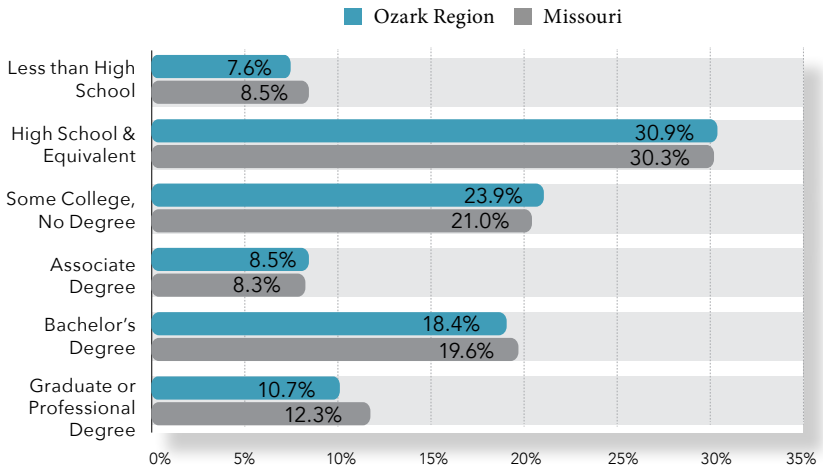
Workforce Demographics

	Ozark Region	Missouri	United States
Average Monthly Employment in 2024	274,460	3,016,886	161,346,000
Average Unemployment Rate in 2024	3.6%	3.7%	4.0%
Male	50.3%	49.9%	51.2%
Female	49.7%	50.1%	48.8%
Non-White	9.8%	18.1%	24.9%
Hispanic or Latino	4.9%	5.1%	18.3%
Ages 55 and Older	22.3%	23.5%	24.1%
With Disabilities (Ages 18-64)	12.7%	12.6%	10.7%
Below Poverty Levels (Ages 18-64)	14.1%	12.1%	11.6%
Language other than English (Ages 18-64)	5.9%	7.4%	23.8%
Education of Associate Degree or Higher (25 years & Older)	37.5%	40.2%	43.8%
Veterans (Age 18-64)	4.9%	4.7%	4.2%

SOURCE: QWI 2024 Q1; PRIVATE OWNERSHIP. CENSUS 2023 ACS 5 YEARS DATA, LAUS 2024 DATA

Educational attainment rates for the Ozark Region are slightly behind those of the state for those with bachelor's or advanced degrees. Thirty-eight percent of the region's population, age 25 and older, has an associate, bachelor's, or advanced degree compared to 40.2 percent for the state, and 43.8 percent for the nation. About 7.6 percent of the region's population age 25 and older has less than high school education.

Educational Attainment



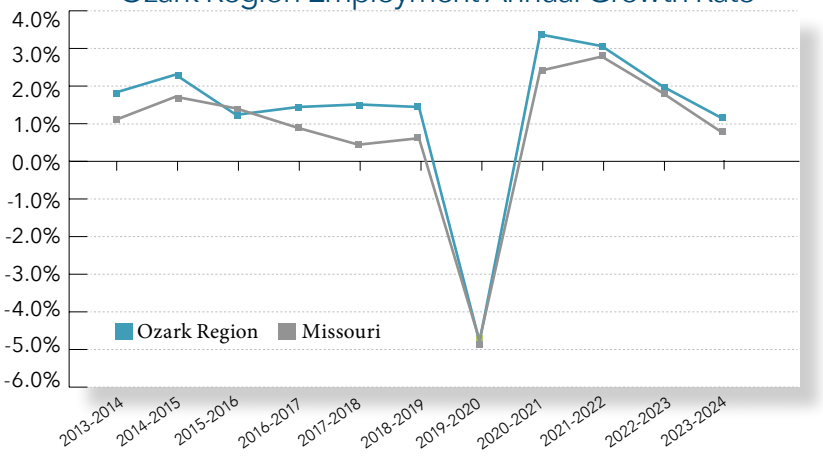
SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, ACS 2023 5 YEAR ESTIMATES

OZARK REGION

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

The Ozark Region averaged over 255,700 jobs in 2024. The region gained 2,957 jobs in 2024, an increase of 1.2 percent. Missouri employment increased by 0.8 percent in 2024. From 2020 to 2024, the Ozark Region averaged 2.0 percent compound annual growth for an overall increase of 10.6 percent. During that same period (2020-2024) Missouri's compound annual employment gain was 1.6 percent for an overall gain of 8.3 percent.

Ozark Region Employment Annual Growth Rate



SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, QCEW

Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest employing industry in the Ozark Region, showing consistent growth over the years. Totaling more than 47,300 jobs in 2024, the industry added 4,933 jobs at a compound annual growth rate of 2.2 percent since 2020. The *Educational Services* industry has the second largest employment, employing more than 35,400. The industry gained over 5,900 jobs at a compound annual growth rate of 3.7 percent from 2000 to 2024. The *Retail Trade* industry also continues to be one of the largest employing industries in the region with over 34,000 jobs in 2024, a gain of over 2,870 jobs since 2020.

The *Manufacturing* industry also added jobs, with a gain of over 800 jobs since 2020. *Accommodation and Food Services, Manufacturing, and Public Administration* were also among the largest industries in the region. *Management of Companies and Enterprises* and *Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction* decreased in employment compared to 2020.

Ozark Region Top Employing Industries

	Employment 2020	Employment 2024	Net Change	2020-2024 CAGR	2023 Annual Wages
Health Care and Social Assistance	42,448	47,381	4,933	2.2%	$60,900
Educational Services	29,535	35,468	5,933	3.7%	$58,044
Retail Trade	31,134	34,011	2,877	1.8%	$37,620
Accommodation and Food Services	23,072	28,168	5,096	4.1%	$24,420
Manufacturing	26,300	27,116	816	0.6%	$56,748
Public Administration	25,562	26,769	1,207	0.9%	$53,520
Construction	12,912	14,959	2,047	3.0%	$64,632
Finance and Insurance	10,973	11,946	973	1.7%	$71,424
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	9,567	10,659	1,092	2.2%	$44,292
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	8,561	9,750	1,189	2.6%	$70,188
Transportation and Warehousing	7,501	8,777	1,276	3.2%	$45,972
Wholesale Trade	7,686	8,003	317	0.8%	$72,732
Other Services (except Public Administration)	6,412	7,224	812	2.4%	$45,876
Management of Companies and Enterprises	4,868	4,634	-234	-1.0%	$77,856
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3,580	4,232	652	3.4%	$30,000
Information	3,487	3,507	20	0.1%	$62,880
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2,901	3,128	227	1.5%	$49,524
Utilities	2,573	3,018	445	3.2%	$103,080
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1,131	1,536	405	6.3%	$42,924
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	597	593	-4	-0.1%	$74,808

SOURCE: LEHD QWI, 2020-2024 QUARTER 2 DATA, LEHD QWI 2023 ANNUAL AVERAGE FOR WAGES. ALL OWNERSHIP

LOCATION QUOTIENT

To understand the major industries within a region, an analysis of industry concentration or clustering can be useful. The Location Quotient (LQ) describes the concentration of an industry in a geographic region, in relation to the nation, with 1.0 being the national average. Industries with higher than 1.0 LQ indicate a concentration.

The Ozark Region has higher concentrations in *Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation; Truck Transportation; Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions; Accommodation;* and *Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries.*

HIGHEST 2024

LQ 4.2

SCENIC AND SIGHTSEEING TRANSPORTATION

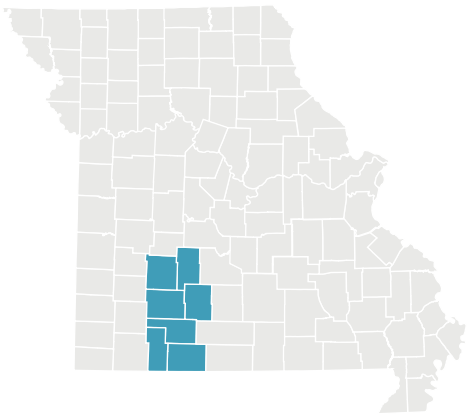
2024 Ozark Region Location Quotients

Industry	Employment	Location Quotient
Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation	209	4.2
Truck Transportation	7,642	3.1
Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions	637	2.2
Accommodation	6,278	2.0
Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries	1,828	1.9
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	2,923	1.7
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book, and Miscellaneous Retailers	4,125	1.7
General Merchandise Retailers	8,390	1.6
Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	3,294	1.4
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Electronics, and Appliance Retailers	1,868	1.4
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	3,321	1.4
Machinery Manufacturing	2,544	1.4
Repair and Maintenance	3,220	1.3
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	7,403	1.3
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	4,284	1.3

SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, QUARTERLY CENSUS OF EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES 2024

OZARK REGION

Projected growth in industry helps to identify future employment needs for an area. Projections indicate that the largest industry growth in the Ozark Region from 2022-2032 will be in the *Educational Services; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Hospitals; Administrative and Support Services;* and *Management of Companies and Enterprises*.



Ozark Region Largest Growth Industries 2022-2032

	Employment 2022	Employment 2032	Change 2022-2032 Numeric	Change 2022-2032 Percent
Educational Services	20,346	23,068	**2,722**	13.4%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	9,671	11,619	**1,948**	20.1%
Hospitals	19,139	21,083	**1,944**	10.2%
Administrative and Support Services	11,255	12,584	**1,329**	11.8%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	3,876	5,190	**1,314**	33.9%
Total Self Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs	14,531	15,460	**929**	6.4%
Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	8,996	9,711	**715**	7.9%
Truck Transportation	8,079	8,773	**694**	8.6%
Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing	1,411	1,988	**577**	40.9%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	6,470	7,017	**547**	8.5%

SOURCE: MERIC INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS, 2022-2032

PROJECTED GROWTH BY INDUSTRY HELPS TO IDENTIFY FUTURE EMPLOYMENT NEEDS FOR AN AREA.

OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS

MERIC produces occupational projections that estimates labor demand over a 10-year period. The current projections cycle projected industry and occupation employment from 2022-2032. MERIC categorizes these occupations using its Now-Next-Later method to help job seekers understand the training, education, and experience requirements for various occupations.

NOW jobs typically require short-term on-the-job training, little to no experience, and/or a high school diploma. **Now** occupations with the most projected openings are *Cashiers; Stockers and Order Fillers;* and *Retail Salespersons. Postal Service Mail Carriers; Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks;* and *Reservation and Transportation Ticket Agents and Travel Clerks* are projected to be the fastest growing **Now** occupations over the next decade.

NEXT jobs typically require a non-degree certificate, associate degree, apprenticeship, some experience, or moderate- to long-term training. *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers; Cooks, Restaurant;* and *Nursing Assistants* are projected to have the most openings for the **Next** category of occupations. *Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers; Tour and Travel Guides;* and *Paralegals and Legal Assistants* are the fastest growing **Next** occupations.

LATER jobs typically require a bachelor's degree or higher. For **Later** occupations, *General and Operations Managers; Registered Nurses;* and *Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education* are projected to have the most openings. *Software Developers; Lawyers;* and *Teaching Assistants, Postsecondary* are the fastest growing **Later** occupations.

Ozark Region Fastest Growing Occupations

NOW

- *Postal Service Mail Carriers*
- *Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks*
- *Reservation and Transportation Ticket Agents and Travel Clerks*
- *Shuttle Drivers and Chauffeurs*
- *Telemarketers*

NEXT

- *Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers*
- *Tour and Travel Guides*
- *Paralegals and Legal Assistants*
- *Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers*
- *Computer User Support Specialists*

LATER

- *Software Developers* ★
- *Lawyers*
- *Teaching Assistants, Postsecondary*
- *Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/ Technical Education*
- *Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education*

SOURCE: MERIC OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS, 2022-2032

NOTE: OCCUPATIONS WITH ANNUAL TOTAL OPENINGS OF LESS THAN 50 ARE OMITTED

★ DENOTES OCCUPATIONS IN THE TOP TEN ONLINE JOB ADS FOR MAY 2023- APRIL 2024 IN THE REGION AND WITHIN THE NOW-NEXT-LATER CLASSIFICATION

OZARK REGION

OZARK REGION LONG-TERM OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS BY TOP OPENINGS

OCCUPATION TITLE	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Annual Growth Openings	Annual Exits	Annual Transfers	Annual Total Openings	Median Wages
NOW OCCUPATIONS							
Cashiers	*6,875*	*6,952*	*8*	*665*	*670*	**1,343**	*$27,779*
Stockers and Order Fillers	*6,793*	*7,283*	*49*	*438*	*689*	**1,176**	*$34,192*
Retail Salespersons ★	*7,207*	*7,353*	*15*	*478*	*576*	**1,069**	*$29,726*
Waiters and Waitresses ★	*4,616*	*4,774*	*16*	*404*	*567*	**987**	*$28,930*
Home Health and Personal Care Aides ★	*5,990*	*6,359*	*37*	*494*	*412*	**943**	*$29,159*
NEXT OCCUPATIONS							
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers ★	*7,518*	*8,157*	*64*	*355*	*459*	**878**	*$55,636*
Cooks, Restaurant	*3,595*	*3,723*	*13*	*250*	*298*	**561**	*$30,105*
Nursing Assistants	*2,793*	*3,039*	*25*	*185*	*228*	**438**	*$34,004*
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers ★	*2,329*	*2,403*	*7*	*119*	*227*	**353**	*$35,366*
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General ★	*3,260*	*3,598*	*34*	*151*	*156*	**341**	*$40,503*
LATER OCCUPATIONS							
General and Operations Managers ★	*8,382*	*8,831*	*45*	*214*	*462*	**721**	*$66,023*
Registered Nurses ★	*7,428*	*8,120*	*69*	*258*	*160*	**487**	*$63,995*
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	*2,935*	*3,333*	*40*	*105*	*103*	**248**	*$47,540*
Accountants and Auditors ★	*1,983*	*2,228*	*24*	*65*	*95*	**184**	*$59,373*
Human Resources Specialists	*1,389*	*1,536*	*15*	*44*	*76*	**135**	*$55,150*

SOURCE: MERIC OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS, 2022-2032 ★ *DENOTES OCCUPATIONS IN THE TOP TEN ONLINE JOB ADS FOR MAY 2023- APRIL 2024 IN THE REGION AND WITHIN THE NOW-NEXT-LATER CLASSIFICATION*

ONLINE JOB POSTINGS

Job postings are an indicator of demand and opportunities in an area and can assist individuals seeking job opportunities in current in-demand occupations. According to information based on online job posting data collected and aggregated from May 1, 2024 to April 30, 2025 by Lightcast™ for the Ozark Region, jobs like *Registered Nurses; Retail Salespersons;* and *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers* had a high number of job postings in the region during the last year.

OCCUPATION TITLE	ONLINE JOB POSTINGS
NOW OCCUPATIONS	
Retail Salespersons	*2,380*
Customer Service Representatives	*1,240*
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	*1,150*
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	*970*
Janitors and Cleaners	*830*
NEXT OCCUPATIONS	
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	*2,060*
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	*1,390*
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	*1,130*
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	*1,110*
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing	*910*
LATER OCCUPATIONS	
Registered Nurses	*5,660*
Medical and Health Services Managers	*750*
General and Operations Managers	*580*
Physicians, All Other	*570*
Sales Managers	*490*

SOURCE: LIGHTCAST™, ONLINE JOB ADS FROM MAY 1, 2024 - APRIL 30, 2025